



# are you **Stressed?** Reducing Your Stress

About 64% of Americans are trying to reduce their stress level. Stress is a necessary phenomenon that we've all experienced, and life would be dull without it. So what is stress? Put simply, stress happens when a person's coping skills are outmatched by the demands the person believes they must face.

Stress directly affects physical health. Racing heartbeats and sweating are caused by hormones that help us cope with stress and other threats. If a stressor only lasts a short time, the physical effects will also be short. However, the longer a person feels stressed, the longer the body is reacting. This can lead to more serious and permanent health issues.

### The Myths And Truth About Stress

Here are some common misconceptions and truths about stress and how it can be handled.

MYTH	TRUTH
Everyone experiences the same type of stress.	Everyone does not experience the same type of stress. What is stressful for you may or may not be stressful for someone else, and each of us responds to stress differently.
Stress is never positive.	To the contrary, some stress can be extremely positive. For example, the birth of a child or getting married.
We all experience stress and there's nothing you can do about it.	There are ways to counteract negative stress. Your best bets are establishing boundaries and setting priorities.
You should only be concerned when you experience major symptoms of stress.	Not necessarily. Even minor symptoms such as headaches or stomach acid are early warning signs. The key is to recognize and react.

There are many different ways to reduce your stress levels. Some are quick fix methods for lowering stress, like drinking alcohol or eating. These methods may provide quick relief to your stress, but are not long term solutions to reducing your overall stress level, and are often unhealthy when done over a long period of time. Here are some healthier ways to keep your mind and body ready to deal with stress.

Make connections with family and friends. Good relationships and support from those who care about you can help you feel less stressed.

Set small, realistic goals. Use small steps to get you through busy times instead of making large, overwhelming goals.

Make a decision to not let stress get the best of you.

Do activities you enjoy. Taking time out for personal leisure time is important.

Find out what is stressing you and see if it is easy to fix.

Keep track of what changes your moods.

Make time for yourself during the week, even ten minutes of personal time will help.

Look at your schedule, set priorities, & delegate tasks if possible.

Reach out to someone who will listen to you and encourage you.

This person might be a friend, family member, or another adult whose advice you value.





# Preventing Medical Errors

## Top 10 Tips

Even with skilled healthcare providers and advanced medical technology, unfortunately, medical errors still happen from time to time.

The good news is that medical errors can be prevented. The following tips are presented to help you take an active role in staying safe in the medical care system. Remember, as a consumer of medical care, much of the burden for preventing medical errors falls in your hands.

**1 Take an active role in your healthcare.** Sure, some mistakes happen because the healthcare system is complex, but many others happen because doctors and patients don't communicate clearly with each other. Taking an active role in your healthcare is the single most important thing you can do to prevent medical errors.

**2 Choose a hospital that has experience in the procedure you need.** Research shows that patients tend to have better results when they are treated at hospitals that have a great deal of experience with their condition.

**3 Make sure your healthcare provider knows about all medications you are taking.** Problems related to the use of pharmaceutical drugs account for nearly 10 percent of all hospital admissions. That's why it's a good idea at each annual check-up to bring in every medication you're taking (even over-the-counter medications) so your healthcare provider can update your files, and review potential complications.

**4 Double check your prescriptions, and then check them again.** According to the Institute of Medicine, as many as 7,000 deaths occur each year as a result of incorrect prescriptions. Check the label on your medicine bottle against the name on your prescription! Also, read the label directions carefully before leaving the pharmacy. Does "four doses daily" mean one pill every six hours around the clock, or just during waking hours?

**5 Understand your course of treatment.** When being discharged after a hospital procedure, ask your healthcare provider to explain your treatment plan. Healthcare providers often think they give more information than they really do, and to make things worse, a recent study showed that patients forget as much as 80 percent of what they are told by their healthcare provider within a short amount of time.  
**Two key points here:**  
1.) Ask as many questions as you need to in order to feel comfortable, and  
2.) Don't forget to write down instructions!

**6 Get an advocate.** If you're going in for major surgery or an extended stay, have an advocate with you to help with critical decisions—you may not be thinking clearly because of medications you're taking. Ask a family member or trusted friend to help get things done, and speak for your best interests when you can't.

**7 Ask healthcare workers to wash their hands.** Hand washing is an important way to prevent the spread of infections in hospitals. Yet, it is not done regularly or thoroughly enough. A recent study found that when patients checked whether healthcare workers washed their hands, the workers washed their hands more often and used more soap.

**8 Inform your doctor about any allergies you may have.** It doesn't matter how minor the allergy is, the healthcare provider still needs to know about it. Some people are allergic to certain antibiotics (like penicillin). It's especially important to inform your healthcare provider of this type of allergy in order to avoid potentially serious complications.

**9 Ask about tests and procedures.** Don't assume that no news is good news. By being informed, and asking about the outcomes of tests and procedures, you'll engage your healthcare provider in conversation that forces both of you to think through solutions, avoiding oversights and mistakes.

**10 Designate a lead care-giver.** Make sure that a single healthcare provider (like your personal doctor) is in charge of your care instead of a group of caregivers who each know relatively little about your condition.

